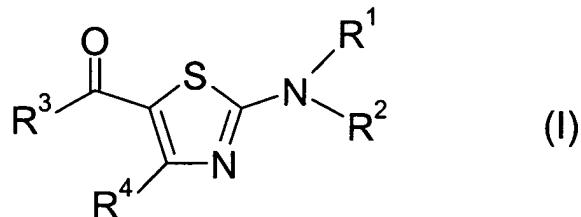


In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A compound of formula I:



wherein:

R¹ is aryl or heteroaryl, wherein at least one of the two meta positions of each aryl and heteroaryl group is substituted with R⁵;

R² is hydrogen, alkyl or cycloalkyl;

R³ is cycloalkyl, or aryl or heteroaryl, wherein at least one of the two ortho positions of each cycloalkyl, or aryl and heteroaryl group is substituted with R⁶;

R⁴ is hydrogen, alkyl or cycloalkyl;

R⁵ is hydrogen, cyano, trifluoromethyl, alkyl-SO₂-, amino-SO₂-, halogen, alkoxy, alkylcarbonyl or aminocarbonyl; and

R⁶ is hydrogen, halogen, cyano, nitro, trifluoromethyl, alkyl, alkoxy, hydroxy or alkoxy carbonyl; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or ester thereof; with the proviso that one of R⁵ and R⁶ is not hydrogen and with the proviso that the following compounds are excluded:

(2,4-dichlorophenyl)-[2-[(3,4-dichlorophenyl)amino]-5-thiazolyl]-methanone,

(3,4-dichlorophenyl)-[2-[(3,4-dichlorophenyl)amino]-5-thiazolyl]-methanone,

[2-[(3,4-dichlorophenyl)amino]-5-thiazolyl]phenyl-methanone,

(4-bromophenyl)-[2-(3,4-dichlorophenyl)amino]-5-thiazolyl]-methanone,

(4-chlorophenyl)-[2-[3,4-dichlorophenyl)amino]-5-thiazolyl]-methanone,

[2-[(3,4-dichlorophenyl)amino]-5-thiazolyl](4-fluorophenyl)-methanone,

[2-[(2-chlorophenyl)amino]-5-thiazolyl](2,4-dichlorophenyl)-methanone and

(2,4-dichlorophenyl)-[2-(phenylamino)-5-thiazolyl]-methanone.

2. (Original) The compound according to claim 1, wherein R⁴ is hydrogen or methyl.

3. (Original) The compound according to claim 1, wherein R² is hydrogen.

4. (Currently Amended) The compound according to claim 1, wherein R³ is cycloalkyl which is cyclohexyl, aryl which is naphthyl or phenyl, ~~heteroaryl which is selected from pyridyl, pyrazinyl and thiophenyl~~, wherein at least one of the two ortho positions of each cyclohexyl, naphthyl, and phenyl, ~~pyridyl, pyrazinyl and thiophenyl~~ group is substituted with R⁶.

5. (Currently Amended) The compound according to claim 4, wherein R³ is aryl which is phenyl ~~or heteroaryl which is pyridyl~~ and wherein at least one of the two ortho positions of each ~~said phenyl and pyridyl~~ group is substituted with R⁶.

6. (Original) The compound according to claim 1, wherein R¹ is phenyl or pyridyl and, wherein at least one of the two meta positions of each phenyl or pyridyl group is substituted with R⁵.

7. (Original) The compound according to claim 6, wherein R⁵ is selected from cyano, trifluoromethyl, alkyl-SO₂-, amino-SO₂-, halogen, alkoxy, alkylcarbonyl and aminocarbonyl.

8. (Original) The compound according to claim 7, wherein R⁵ is selected from cyano, trifluoromethyl, alkyl-SO₂-, amino-SO₂- and alkylcarbonyl.

9. (Original) The compound according to claim 8, wherein R⁵ is selected from cyano, trifluoromethyl, methyl-SO₂-, NH₂-SO₂- and methylcarbonyl.

10. (Original) The compound according to claim 1, wherein R⁶ is selected from halogen, cyano, nitro, trifluoromethyl, alkyl, alkoxy, hydroxy and alkoxycarbonyl.

11. (Original) The compound according to claim 10, wherein R⁶ is selected from halogen, trifluoromethyl and alkyl.

12. (Currently Amended) The compound according to claim 1 selected from 3-[5-(2-Fluoro-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile; 3-[5-(2-Chloro-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile; (2-Chloro-phenyl)-[2-(3-trifluoromethyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-methanone; 3-[5-(2-Methyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile; o-Tolyl-[2-(3-trifluoromethyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-methanone; 1-{3-[5-(2-Methyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-phenyl}-ethanone; 3-[5-(2-Ethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile; 3-[5-(2-Trifluoromethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile; ~~3-[5-(3-Methyl-pyridine-2-carbonyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzonitrile;~~ [2-(3-Methanesulfonyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-o-tolyl-methanone; (2-Ethyl-phenyl)-[2-(3-methanesulfonyl-phenylamino)-thiazol-5-yl]-methanone; 4-[5-(2-Ethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-pyridine-2-carbonitrile; 4-[5-(2-Methyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-pyridine-2-carbonitrile; 3-[5-(2-Ethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzenesulfonamide; and 3-[5-(2-Trifluoromethyl-benzoyl)-thiazol-2-ylamino]-benzenesulfonamide.

13. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound in accordance with claim 1 and a therapeutically inert carrier.

14. (Original) A method for the treatment or prophylaxis of obesity in a patient in need of said treatment, which comprises administering to said patient an effective amount of a compound of claim 1.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 14, wherein said compound is administered orally in an amount of from about 0.1 mg to 20 mg per kg per day.

16. (Original) The pharmaceutical composition of claim 13 further comprising a therapeutically effective amount of orlistat.